

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1-21. (cancelled)

22. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener adapted to mount an object to a panel, the panel including a mounting aperture therein, the fastener comprising:

a body portion having a pair of side members coupled to each other by a curved base portion at an insertion end of the generally U-shaped fastener, the pair of side members defining a slot between the pair of side members, the slot being adapted to receive a coupling member from the object;

a flange member extending outwardly from each of the pair of side members near an end opposite the insertion end of the generally U-shaped fastener, each flange member being adapted to contact a surrounding portion of the mounting aperture;

a plurality of finger members extending inwardly into the slot from each of the pair of side members or from the flange members, the plurality of finger members being adapted to grasp the coupling member of the object upon the coupling member being inserted into the slot; and

at least one abutting flange extending outwardly from each of the pair of side members, each of the at least one abutting flange having a generally straight portion, a transition portion, and an engaging portion, the generally straight portion coupling the at least one abutting flange to one of the side members near the insertion

end of generally U-shaped fastener, the transition portion being coupled to the generally straight portion and being defined by an exterior convex surface, the engaging portion having an exterior concave surface immediately abutting the exterior convex surface of the transition portion and extending continuously from the transition portion, the exterior concave surface being adapted to engage an edge of the mounting aperture upon insertion therein to retain the generally U-shaped fastener in the mounting aperture.

23. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 22, wherein an exterior surface of the abutting flange member extending from the transition portion to a distal end of the abutting flange consists essentially of the concave engaging surface.

24. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 22, wherein the radius of the exterior concave engaging surface is between 3.5 millimeters and 6.0 millimeters.

25. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 24, wherein the radius of the exterior concave engaging surface is 4.75 millimeters.

26. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 24, wherein the center of curvature for the radius is between 2 millimeters and 4 millimeters from the end opposite the insertion end of the generally U-shaped fastener.

27. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 26, wherein the center of curvature for the radius is 2.3 millimeters from the end opposite the insertion end of the generally U-shaped fastener.

28. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 22, wherein the force required to insert the generally U-shaped fastener into the mounting aperture to enable the exterior concave engaging surface to engage an edge of the mounting aperture is about 10 pounds.

29. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 28, wherein the force required to remove the generally U-shaped fastener from the mounting aperture after the exterior concave engaging surface has engaged an edge of the mounting aperture is at least 20 pounds.

30. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 22, wherein the plurality of finger members extend inwardly into the slot at an angle between about 15 degrees and about 25 degrees.

31. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 30, wherein the plurality of finger members extend inwardly into the slot at an angle of about 20 degrees.

32. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener adapted to mount an object to a panel, the panel including a mounting aperture therein, the fastener comprising:

a body portion having a pair of side members coupled to each other by a curved base portion at an insertion end of the generally U-shaped fastener, the pair of side members defining a slot between the pair of side members, the slot being adapted to receive a coupling member from the object;

a flange member extending outwardly from each of the pair of side members near an end opposite the insertion end of the generally U-shaped fastener, each flange member being adapted to contact a surrounding portion of the mounting aperture;

a plurality of finger members extending inwardly into the slot at an angle between about 15 degrees and about 25 degrees into the slot from each of the pair of side members or from the flange members, the plurality of finger members being adapted to grasp the coupling member of the object upon the coupling member being inserted into the slot; and

at least one abutting flange extending outwardly from each of the pair of side members, each of the at least one abutting flange having a generally straight portion, a transition portion and an engaging portion, the generally straight portion coupling the at least one abutting flange to one of the side members near the insertion end of generally U-shaped fastener, the transition portion being coupled to the generally straight portion and being defined by an exterior convex surface, the engaging portion having an exterior concave surface immediately abutting the exterior convex surface of the transition portion and extending continuously from the transition portion, the exterior

concave engaging surface having a radius between 3.5 millimeters and 6.0 millimeters and being adapted to engage an edge of the mounting aperture upon insertion therein to retain the generally U-shaped fastener in the mounting aperture.

33. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 32, wherein an exterior surface of the abutting flange member extending from the transition portion to a distal end of the abutting flange consists essentially of the concave engaging surface.

34. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 33, wherein the radius of the exterior concave engaging surface is 4.75 millimeters.

35. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 32, wherein the center of curvature for the radius is between 2 millimeters and 4 millimeters from the end opposite the insertion end of the generally U-shaped fastener.

36. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 35, wherein the center of curvature for the radius is 2.3 millimeters from the end opposite the insertion end of the generally U-shaped fastener.

37. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 32, wherein the force required to insert the generally U-shaped fastener into the mounting aperture to enable the exterior concave engaging surface to engage an edge of the mounting aperture is about 10 pounds.

38. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 37, wherein the force required to remove the generally U-shaped fastener from the mounting aperture after the exterior concave engaging surface has engaged an edge of the mounting aperture is at least 20 pounds.

39. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 32, wherein the plurality of finger members extend inwardly into the slot at an angle of about 20 degrees.

40. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 32, wherein an opening in the flange member allows the at least one abutting flange to move inwardly into the opening without contacting the flange member.

41. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 32, wherein the generally U-shaped fastener is formed from a sheet of material.

42. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener formed from a sheet of material and adapted to mount an object to a panel, the panel including a mounting aperture therein, the fastener comprising:

a body portion bent at a curved base portion defining an insertion end of the generally U-shaped fastener and having a pair of side members extending from the curved base portion, the pair of side members defining a slot between the pair of side members, the slot being adapted to receive a coupling member from the object;

a flange member bent to extend outwardly from each of the pair of side members near an end opposite the insertion end of the generally U-shaped fastener, each flange member being adapted to contact a surrounding portion of the mounting aperture;

a plurality of finger members bent to extend inwardly into the slot from each of the pair of side members or from the flange member, each of the plurality of finger members extending inwardly at an angle between about 15 degrees and about 25 degrees into the slot from each of the pair of side members or from the flange member, the plurality of finger members being adapted to grasp the coupling member of the object upon the coupling member being inserted into the slot; and

at least one abutting flange bent to extend outwardly from each of the pair of side members, each of the at least one abutting flange having a generally straight portion, a transition portion and an engaging portion, the generally straight portion being bent to extend from one of the side members near the insertion end of generally U-shaped fastener, the transition portion being bent to extend from the generally straight portion and being bent to define an exterior convex surface, the engaging portion being

bent to extend from the transition portion and being bent to define an exterior concave surface immediately abutting the exterior convex surface of the transition portion and extending continuously from the exterior convex surface, the exterior concave engaging surface having a radius between 3.5 millimeters and 6.0 millimeters and being adapted to engage an edge of the mounting aperture upon insertion therein to retain the generally U-shaped fastener in the mounting aperture.

43. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 42, wherein an exterior surface of the abutting flange member extending from the transition portion to a distal end of the abutting flange consists essentially of the concave engaging surface.

44. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 43, wherein an opening in the flange member allows the at least one abutting flange to move inwardly into the opening without contacting the flange member.

45. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 44, wherein the force required to insert the generally U-shaped fastener into the mounting aperture to enable the exterior concave engaging surface to engage an edge of the mounting aperture is about 10 pounds.

46. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 45, wherein the force required to remove the generally U-shaped fastener from the mounting aperture after the exterior concave engaging surface has engaged an edge of the mounting aperture is at least 20 pounds.

47. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 46, wherein the center of curvature for the radius is between 2 millimeters and 4 millimeters from the end opposite the insertion end of the generally U-shaped fastener.

48. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 47, wherein the plurality of finger members extend inwardly into the slot at an angle of about 20 degrees.

49. (new) A generally U-shaped fastener according to Claim 48, wherein the center of curvature for the radius is 2.3 millimeters from the end opposite the insertion end of the generally U-shaped fastener.